

## CLAIMS

- 1 1. A method for identifying and verifying documents to determine if they are genuine,  
2 counterfeit or altered, the method comprising the steps of:  
3 determining a first characteristic of a first document to be verified, the first  
4 characteristic being common to a first group of documents that is less than all documents;  
5 retrieving a set of second characteristics for the first group of documents, where  
6 individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the second  
7 characteristics;  
8 comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the second  
9 characteristics to identify the first document;  
10 retrieving a set of reference information unique to the first document; and  
11 comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the set of  
12 reference information to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.
- 1 2. The method in accordance with claim 1 further comprising the step of providing an  
2 indication that the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered based upon the results of  
3 the reference information comparing step.
- 1 3. The method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the first characteristic is the size of  
2 the first document, all documents are divided into size ranges and the first group of  
3 documents are those documents within one of the size ranges, and the second characteristics  
4 are found at specific locations on individual documents of the first group of documents.
- 1 4. The method in accordance with claim 3 wherein the second characteristics include  
2 color patterns at specific locations on the documents.
- 1 5. The method in accordance with claim 1 further comprising the steps of:  
2 keeping track of each type of document identified in the first group of documents;

3 selecting second characteristics for use in the second characteristic comparing step  
4 starting with second characteristics for the most commonly identified type of document in  
5 the first group of documents.

1 6. Apparatus for identifying and verifying documents to determine if they are genuine,  
2 counterfeit or altered, the method comprising the steps of:  
3 means for determining a first characteristic of a first document to be verified, the first  
4 characteristic being common to a first group of documents that is less than all documents;  
5 means for retrieving a set of second characteristics for the first group of documents,  
6 where individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the second  
7 characteristics;  
8 means for comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the  
9 second characteristics to identify the first document;  
10 means for retrieving a set of reference information unique to the first document; and  
11 means for comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the set  
12 of reference information to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.

1 7. The apparatus in accordance with claim 1 further comprising means for providing an  
2 indication that the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered based upon the results  
3 from the reference information comparing means.

1 8. The apparatus in accordance with claim 6 wherein the first characteristic is the size  
2 of the first document, all documents are divided into size ranges and the first group of  
3 documents are those documents within one of the size ranges, and the second characteristics  
4 are found at specific locations on individual documents of the first group of documents.

1 9. The apparatus in accordance with claim 8 wherein the second characteristics include  
2 color patterns at specific locations on the documents.

1 10. The apparatus in accordance with claim 6 further comprising:  
2 means for keeping track of each type of document identified in the first group of  
3 documents;  
4 means for selecting second characteristics for use by the second characteristic  
5 comparing means starting with second characteristics for the most commonly identified type  
6 of document in the first group of documents.

1 11. A method for identifying and verifying documents to determine if they are genuine,  
2 counterfeit or altered, the method comprising the steps of:

3 determining the size of a first document to be verified, the size being common to a  
4 first group of documents that is less than all documents;

5 retrieving a set of first characteristics for the first group of documents, where  
6 individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the first characteristics;

7 comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the first  
8 characteristics to identify the first document;

9 retrieving a set of reference information for the first document based upon the  
10 identity of the first document; and

11 comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the set of  
12 reference information to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.

1 12. The method in accordance with claim 11 further comprising the steps of:

2 keeping track of each type of document identified in the first group of documents;

3 and

4 selecting first characteristics for use in the first characteristic comparing step starting  
5 with first characteristics for the most commonly identified type of document in the first  
6 group of documents.

1 13. The method in accordance with claim 12 further comprising the step of providing an  
2 indication that the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered based upon the results of  
3 the third characteristics comparing step.

1 14. The method in accordance with claim 13 wherein the second characteristics include  
2 color patterns at specific locations on the documents.

1 15. Apparatus for identifying and verifying documents to determine if they are genuine,  
2 counterfeit or altered, the apparatus comprising:

3 means for determining the size of a first document to be verified, the size being  
4 common to a first group of documents that is less than all documents;

5 means for retrieving a set of first characteristics for the first group of documents,  
6 where individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the first  
7 characteristics;

8 means for comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the first  
9 characteristics to identify the first document;

10 means for retrieving a set of reference information for the first document based upon  
11 the identity of the first document; and

12 means for comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the set  
13 of reference information to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.

1 16. The apparatus in accordance with claim 15 further comprising:

2 means for keeping track of each type of document identified in the first group of  
3 documents; and

4 means for selecting first characteristics for use by the first characteristic comparing  
5 means starting with first characteristics for the most commonly identified type of document  
6 in the first group of documents;

1 17. The apparatus in accordance with claim 16 further comprising means for providing  
2 an indication that the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered based upon the results  
3 of the third characteristics comparing means.

1 18. The apparatus in accordance with claim 17 wherein the second characteristics  
2 include color at specific locations on the documents.

1 19. A method for identifying and verifying documents to determine if they are genuine,  
2 counterfeit or altered, the method comprising the steps of:  
3 determining a first characteristic of a first document to be verified, the first  
4 characteristic being common to a first group of documents that is less than all documents;  
5 retrieving a set of second characteristics for the first group of documents, where  
6 individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the second  
7 characteristics;  
8 comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the second  
9 characteristics to identify the first document;  
10 keeping track of each type of document identified in the first group of documents;  
11 selecting first characteristics for use in the first characteristic comparing step starting  
12 with first characteristics for the most commonly identified type of document in the first  
13 group of documents;  
14 retrieving a set of reference information for the first document based upon the  
15 identity of the first document; and  
16 comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the reference  
17 information to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.

1 20. The method in accordance with claim 19 further comprising the step of providing an  
2 indication that the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered based upon the results of  
3 the third characteristics comparing step.

1 21. The method in accordance with claim 20 wherein the first characteristics include  
2 color patterns at specific locations on the documents.

1 22. Apparatus for identifying and verifying documents to determine if they are genuine,  
2 counterfeit or altered, the apparatus comprising:  
3 means for determining a first characteristic of a first document to be verified, the first  
4 characteristic being common to a first group of documents that is less than all documents;

5 means for retrieving a set of second characteristics for the first group of documents,  
6 where individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the second  
7 characteristics;  
8 means for comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the  
9 second characteristics to identify the first document;  
10 means for keeping track of each type of document identified in the first group of  
11 documents;  
12 means for selecting second characteristics for use in the second characteristic  
13 comparing step starting with second characteristics for the most commonly identified type of  
14 document in the first group of documents;  
15 means for retrieving a set of reference information for the first document based upon  
16 the identity of the first document; and  
17 means for comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the set  
18 of reference information to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.

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23. The apparatus in accordance with claim 22 further comprising means for providing  
24 an indication that the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered based upon the results  
25 of the reference information comparing means.

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10 selecting first characteristics for use in the first characteristic comparing step starting  
11 with first characteristics for the most commonly identified type of document in the first  
12 group of documents;  
13 retrieving a set of reference information unique to the first document based upon the  
14 identity of the first document; and  
15 comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the reference  
16 information to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.

1 26. The method in accordance with claim 25 further comprising the step of providing an  
2 indication that the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered based upon the results of  
3 the reference information comparing means.

4 27. The method in accordance with claim 26 wherein the first characteristics include  
5 color at specific locations on the documents.

6 28. Apparatus for identifying and verifying documents to determine if they are genuine,  
7 counterfeit or altered, the apparatus comprising:

8 means for determining the size of a first document to be verified, the size being  
9 common to a first group of documents that is less than all documents;

10 means for retrieving a set of first characteristics for the first group of documents,  
11 where individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the first  
12 characteristics;

13 means for comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the first  
14 characteristics to identify the first document;

15 means for keeping track of each type of document identified in the first group of  
16 documents;

means for selecting first characteristics for use by the first characteristic comparing  
means starting with first characteristics for the most commonly identified type of document  
in the first group of documents;

means for retrieving a set of reference information unique to the first document  
based upon the identity of the first document; and

17 means for comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the  
18 reference information to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.

1 29. The apparatus in accordance with claim 28 further comprising means for providing  
2 an indication that the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered based upon the results  
3 of the reference information comparing means.

1 30. The apparatus in accordance with claim 29 wherein the first characteristics include  
2 color at specific locations on the documents.

1 31. A computer readable medium containing executable instructions for identifying and  
2 verifying documents to determine if they are genuine, counterfeit or altered, the executable  
3 program instructions comprising program instructions for:

4 determining a first characteristic of a first document to be verified, the first  
5 characteristic being common to a first group of documents that is less than all documents;

6 retrieving a set of second characteristics for the first group of documents, where  
7 individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the second  
8 characteristics;

9 comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the second  
10 characteristics to identify the first document;

11 retrieving a set of reference information unique to the first document; and

12 comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the reference  
13 information to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.

1 32. A computer readable medium containing executable instructions for identifying and  
2 verifying documents to determine if they are genuine, counterfeit or altered, the executable  
3 program instructions comprising program instructions for:

4 determining the size of a first document to be verified, the size being common to a  
5 first group of documents that is less than all documents;

6 retrieving a set of first characteristics for the first group of documents, where  
7 individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the first characteristics;

